

5. EMPLOYMENT AMONG YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

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Work always has been part of the lives of many youth in the United States (Kerschner, 2000). In recent years, approximately 80% of youth reported holding jobs at some point during high school (National Research Council, 1998). Entry into the labor market often begins earlier than high school, with approximately half of youth ages 12 and 13 reporting that they work (Rothstein & Herz, 2000). With the majority of youth working at some time in their middle- or high-school years, youth employment has become the norm in American society.

Although statistics are gathered regularly about the employment of American youth in the general population, comparatively little is known about the employment patterns of youth with disabilities. This chapter seeks to add to current knowledge by addressing several key questions:

- What is the extent of employment among 13- to 17-year olds with disabilities?
- How much of their employment is work-study, and how much is not school-related?
- What are the characteristics of youth's jobs?
- How do employment experiences differ for youth with different disabilities and demographic characteristics?

According to parents' reports, almost 60% of youth with disabilities were employed during a 12-month period spanning 2000-01—some at work-study jobs and others at non-school-related jobs. Each of these types of job is described below.

Work-Study Employment

Work-study employment in high school involves part-time work for students, either on or off the school campus, that is sanctioned by the school. Some work-study programs arrange for jobs for students, whereas others require students to find their own jobs. Through work-study, students can learn basic employment skills—the importance of showing up, being on time, and doing a job well—as well as skills related to a specific type of job. Work-study students may receive school credit, pay, or both.

In all, approximately 15% of youth with disabilities hold work-study jobs in a given school year. The most common types of job are in food service (19%), maintenance (16%), and clerical work (15%, Exhibit 5-1). In addition, jobs in personal care, trades, and retail each account for 8% to 9% of work-study employment.

**Exhibit 5-1
MOST COMMON TYPES OF WORK-STUDY
JOBS HELD BY STUDENTS WITH
DISABILITIES**

	Percentage	Standard Error
Youth worked at:		
Food service	18.8	3.7
Maintenance*	15.8	3.5
Clerical**	15.2	3.4
Personal care	9.0	2.7
Trades***	8.6	2.7
Retail****	7.7	2.6

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.

* Includes cleaning and grounds-keeping.

** Includes office work; sorting, folding, and stuffing; and stocking.

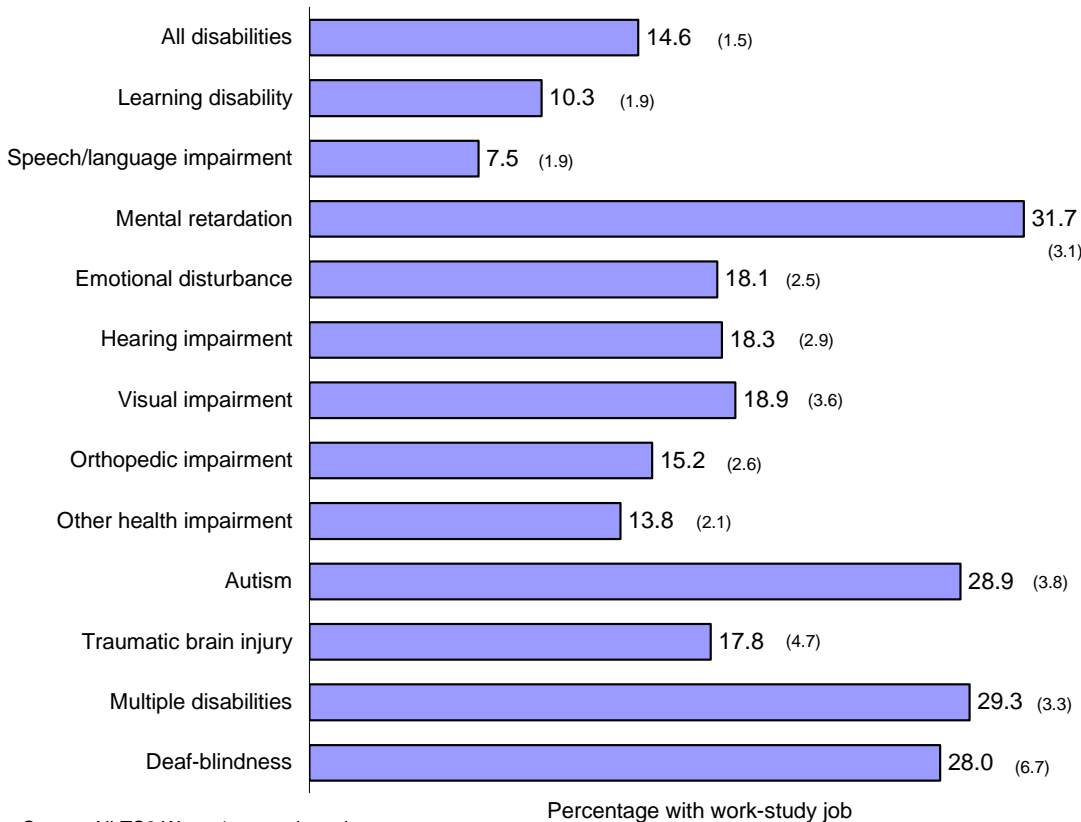
*** Includes auto repair and apprenticeship at skilled trades.

**** Includes sales and cashiering.

The vast majority of youth (91%) who have work-study jobs receive school credit and/or pay for their work. The most common arrangement, which applies to 48% of work-study students with disabilities, is to receive school credit but not pay. Another 28% receive both school credit and pay, and 14% receive pay only.

The percentages of youth in the various disability categories with work-study jobs differ considerably (Exhibit 5-2). At one end of the continuum, work-study is the source of employment for 8% of youth with speech impairments and 10% of youth with learning disabilities. In contrast, approximately 30% of youth with mental retardation, autism, multiple disabilities, or deaf-blindness hold work-study jobs.

**Exhibit 5-2
WORK-STUDY EMPLOYMENT, BY DISABILITY CATEGORY**



Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.
Standard errors are in parentheses.

Compensation for work-study jobs also varies for youth with different types of disabilities. For example, 98% of work-study students with emotional disturbances, but only 64% of work-study students with orthopedic impairments, receive either school credit or pay for their work ($p < .001$). Youth with learning disabilities; hearing, orthopedic, or other health impairments; or multiple disabilities are twice as likely to receive only school credit as to receive both school credit and pay ($p < .05$). In contrast, students with other types of disabilities are about as likely to have one arrangement as the other.

With one exception, the age, gender, household income, and race/ethnicity of youth with disabilities are not associated with their likelihood of having a work-study job or its characteristics. The exception is that girls are significantly more likely than boys to work in personal-care jobs (20% vs. 3%, $p < .01$).

Regular Paid Employment

Paid employment that is not school related (i.e., not work-study) accounts for the vast majority of the employment of youth with disabilities who have jobs. According to parents, somewhat more than half of youth with disabilities (54%) hold regular paid jobs during a 1-year period, similar to the 50% of 13- to 17-year-olds in the general population who did so in 1998.¹

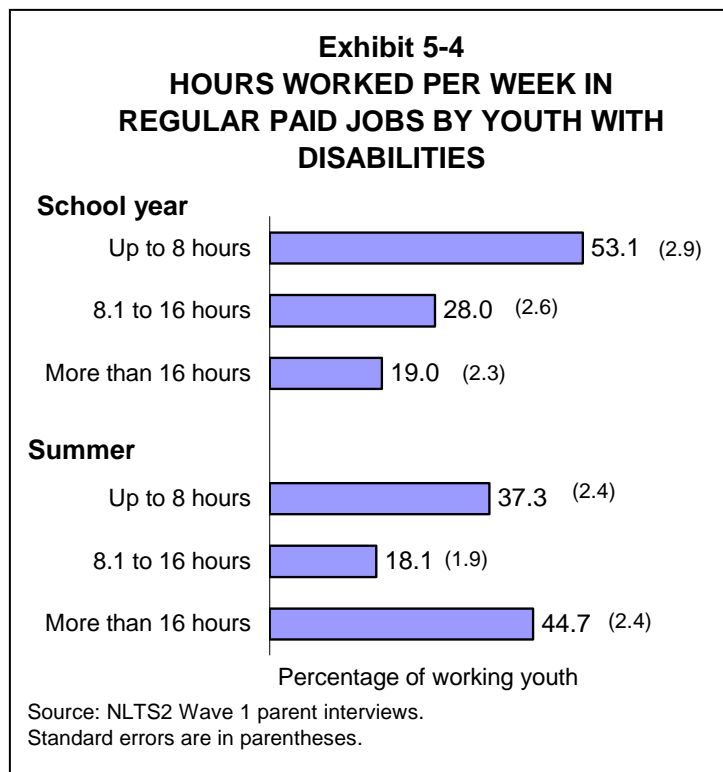
Approximately one-third of youth work during both the summer and the school year (32%); fewer (17%) work only during the summer, and still fewer (5%) work only during the school year. However, the fact that approximately one-third of youth work during both the summer and the school year does not mean that they work the entire year. At a given point in time during a 1-year period, 22% of youth with disabilities are employed.

Exhibit 5-3 MOST COMMON TYPES OF REGULAR PAID JOBS HELD BY WORKING YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES		
	Percentage	Standard Error
Maintenance*	23.5	1.9
Personal care	19.1	1.8
Food service	16.4	1.7
Trades**	7.9	1.2
Retail***	6.4	1.1
Clerical****	6.2	1.1

* Includes cleaning and grounds-keeping.
 ** Includes auto repair and apprenticeship at skilled trades.
 *** Includes sales and cashiering.
 **** *Includes office work; sorting, folding, and stuffing; and stocking.

The most common types of job held by youth with disabilities are in maintenance, personal care, or food service (Exhibit 5-3). Together, these types of job account for almost 60% of youth employment.

¹ Calculated from data for 13- to 17-year-olds from the 1998 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Downloaded from http://data.bls.gov/labjava/nls_outside.jsp.



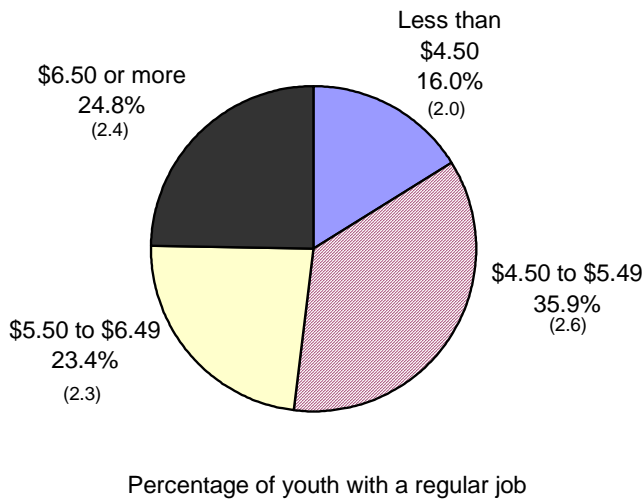
Most youth with disabilities who are employed during the school year (53%) work no more than 8 hours a week (Exhibit 5-4). During the summer, youth tend to work more hours, with more than twice as many (45%) working more than 16 hours per week during the summer as during the school year (19%, $p < .001$). Half of employed youth with disabilities earn minimum wage or more (Exhibit 5-5). However, one in four earn \$6.50 per hour or more, and 16% earn less than \$4.50 per hour.² Compared with youth in the general population,³ youth with disabilities are less likely to earn the minimum wage or more (50% vs. 69%, $p < .001$).⁴

² The federal minimum wage during 2001, when NLTS2 data were collected, was \$5.15. However, many jobs at which youth work, including some food service jobs and freelance jobs (such as babysitting or lawn mowing), are exempt from the federal minimum or may pay a training wage for a limited time. Further, most NLTS2 parents reported youth's wages in round dollar figures. For example, according to parents' reports, 97% of youth in the \$4.50 to \$5.49 category earn \$5.00 per hour. Some of these youth actually may earn the minimum wage. Thus, the calculated percentage earning the minimum wage or more may underestimate the actual percentage because it excludes youth reported to earn \$5.00 per hour who actually earn the minimum wage of \$5.15.

³ Earnings for youth in the general population was calculated from data for 13- to 17-year-olds from the National Adolescent Health Survey. Two differences should be noted. First, in the National Adolescent Health Survey, hourly earnings were reported by youth, rather than by their parents (see Rothstein & Herz, 2000, and Freeman & Medoff, 1982, regarding the effects of differences in respondent regarding youth employment). Second, the time periods covered differ somewhat; NLTS2 data were collected in 2001, and the National Adolescent Health Survey was conducted in 1996. The minimum wage at the time of data collection was \$4.25 per hour.

⁴ Earnings data collected for the general population in 1997 are not directly comparable to those collected for NLTS2 in 2001; they would be expected to be lower because of inflation alone, apart from any real differences in earning power between the two groups of youth. However, earnings relative to the minimum wage standard are provided because changes in that standard over time account in part for the effects of inflation.

**Exhibit 5-5
HOURLY PAY OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES**



Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.
Standard errors are in parentheses.

**Disability Differences in
Employment Patterns**

Employment rates of youth with disabilities vary considerably across the disability categories (Exhibit 5-6). Youth with learning disabilities or other health impairments are the most likely to have been employed in a 1-year period (60% and 56%, respectively), with their rates of employment somewhat exceeding that of the general population of youth. They also have the highest rates of current employment among youth with disabilities (25% and 24%), although these rates also are relatively high for youth with speech or hearing impairments, emotional disturbances, or traumatic brain injuries.

In contrast, 14% of youth with autism, fewer than one-fourth of those with multiple disabilities or deaf-blindness, and fewer

than one-third of youth with orthopedic impairments are employed in a given year. Rates of current employment for youth in these categories range from 5% to 10%. For all youth, the most common employment pattern is to work during both the school year and the summer.

Jobs in maintenance, food service, or personal care account for more than half of employment regardless of disability category, although the percentages of youth employed at each of these types of job differ somewhat. For example, maintenance jobs are particularly common for youth with mental retardation, emotional disturbances, or other health impairments (between 27% and 32%). In contrast, personal-care jobs are particularly common for youth with hearing or visual impairments (24% and 27%, respectively); these also are the categories with the largest percentages of girls. With few exceptions, no other single type of job accounts for the employment of more than 10% of youth in any disability category.

The majority of youth in every disability category who work during the school year work no more than 8 hours per week. Youth with visual or orthopedic impairments or autism are the most likely to work relatively few hours. In contrast, youth with emotional disturbances or traumatic brain injuries are the most likely to work more than 16 hours per week during the school year, almost one-fourth of employed youth in those categories do so. All groups of youth tend to work more hours during the summer than during the school year. More than 40% of youth with learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, or hearing, visual, or other health impairments work more than 16 hours per week during the summer.

Across the disability categories, between 41% and 56% of youth earn the minimum wage or more. Youth with hearing or other health impairments are the most likely to earn the minimum wage or more, whereas those with visual impairments, mental retardation, or multiple disabilities are the least likely to be paid at that rate.

Exhibit 5-6
EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES,
BY DISABILITY CATEGORY

	Learning Dis-ability	Speech/ Language Impair-ment	Mental Retar-dation	Emo-tional Dis-turbance	Hearing Impair-ment	Visual Impair-ment	Ortho-pedic Impair-ment	Other Health Impair-ment	Autism	Trauma-tic Brain Injury	Multiple Disabili-ties	Deaf-Blind-ness
Percentage holding regular paid jobs during the past year:												
At any time	60.1 (2.4)	49.7 (2.5)	35.9 (2.5)	52.6 (2.6)	47.4 (2.9)	35.7 (3.4)	27.4 (2.5)	56.0 (2.4)	14.5 (1.9)	43.6 (4.5)	21.5 (2.2)	22.5 (4.5)
Only during the summer	17.8 (1.9)	15.0 (1.8)	14.1 (1.8)	15.7 (1.9)	14.5 (2.1)	12.6 (2.4)	9.2 (1.6)	18.5 (1.9)	4.9 (1.2)	9.7 (2.7)	6.6 (1.4)	8.7 (3.0)
Only during the school year	5.4 (1.1)	5.6 (1.2)	4.3 (1.0)	5.6 (1.2)	4.1 (1.2)	4.7 (1.5)	2.9 (.9)	5.8 (1.1)	3.7 (1.0)	6.3 (2.2)	2.9 (.9)	5.0 (2.3)
During both the summer and the school year	36.9 (2.4)	29.0 (2.3)	17.5 (1.9)	31.3 (2.4)	28.8 (2.6)	18.4 (2.8)	15.3 (2.0)	31.6 (2.2)	6.0 (1.3)	27.6 (4.1)	12.0 (1.8)	8.7 (3.0)
Percentage currently holding regular paid jobs	25.1 (2.1)	22.0 (2.1)	11.7 (1.6)	19.1 (2.0)	22.1 (2.4)	15.1 (2.5)	9.6 (1.7)	23.8 (2.0)	5.2 (1.2)	17.8 (3.5)	8.1 (1.5)	7.8 (2.8)
Percentage working at:												
Maintenance	21.9 (2.7)	20.2 (2.9)	32.5 (4.1)	27.7 (3.2)	17.7 (3.4)	20.2 (5.4)	21.3 (4.7)	26.7 (2.8)	23.6 (6.0)	22.3 (6.2)	23.8 (5.2)	--
Personal care	20.7 (2.6)	22.2 (3.1)	13.8 (3.0)	12.6 (2.4)	23.7 (3.8)	27.1 (5.9)	22.2 (4.8)	15.6 (2.3)	9.2 (4.1)	20.7 (6.1)	19.8 (4.8)	--
Food service	16.3 (2.4)	14.0 (2.5)	16.8 (3.3)	18.9 (2.8)	14.0 (3.1)	12.8 (4.5)	6.7 (2.9)	16.0 (2.3)	17.8 (5.4)	19.7 (6.0)	16.4 (4.5)	--
Trades	8.1 (1.7)	5.6 (1.7)	6.1 (2.1)	9.8 (2.1)	5.1 (2.0)	1.1 (1.4)	4.5 (2.4)	8.1 (1.7)	6.5 (3.5)	4.6 (3.1)	5.1 (2.7)	--
Retail	6.5 (1.6)	8.5 (2.0)	4.5 (1.8)	6.1 (1.7)	9.4 (2.6)	10.8 (4.1)	4.9 (2.5)	7.1 (1.6)	2.2 (2.1)	12.4 (4.9)	3.6 (2.3)	--
Clerical	5.5 (1.5)	7.7 (2.0)	9.2 (2.5)	7.8 (1.9)	7.9 (2.4)	9.1 (3.8)	14.5 (4.1)	5.0 (1.4)	17.6 (5.4)	5.8 (3.5)	6.7 (3.0)	--
Percentage working number of hours at: ^a												
School year jobs												
Up to 8 hours	51.9 (4.0)	61.0 (4.4)	56.0 (5.8)	51.8 (4.5)	60.2 (5.5)	67.0 (7.7)	73.1 (6.4)	55.9 (3.9)	68.6 (8.5)	58.6 (8.5)	63.5 (7.5)	--
More than 16 hours	19.4 (3.1)	13.4 (3.1)	18.3 (4.5)	23.3 (3.8)	14.9 (4.0)	17.6 (6.2)	3.9 (2.8)	13.0 (2.7)	4.4 (3.8)	23.3 (7.3)	17.3 (5.9)	--
Summer jobs												
Up to 8 hours	35.5 (3.2)	44.0 (3.9)	48.1 (4.9)	34.9 (3.7)	32.3 (4.4)	39.7 (7.3)	56.3 (6.2)	41.6 (3.3)	44.6 (8.0)	50.0 (8.4)	47.7 (7.0)	--
More than 16 hours	45.7 (3.4)	39.2 (3.9)	37.3 (4.7)	48.9 (3.9)	48.2 (4.7)	43.8 (7.4)	26.4 (5.5)	41.5 (3.3)	35.3 (7.7)	36.9 (8.1)	28.2 (6.3)	--
Percentage earning the minimum wage or more	50.9 (3.7)	50.3 (4.2)	43.1 (5.4)	50.1 (4.3)	53.2 (5.1)	41.3 (7.8)	46.7 (6.7)	56.0 (3.6)	48.7 (8.6)	47.6 (9.4)	43.8 (7.5)	--

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.

--Too few to report separately.

^a The category 8.1 to 16 hours is omitted from the table.

Standard errors are in parentheses.

Demographic Differences in Employment Patterns

In the general population, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and family income are associated with youth's probability of employment (Huang, Pergamit, & Shkolnik, 2001; Rothstein, 2001). In addition, being older and being male are related to higher wages for working youth. This section explores the associations between the demographic characteristics of youth with disabilities and their probability of employment and hourly pay, in addition to the types of jobs held and hours worked.

Age. Age is among the strongest influences on youth's employment patterns (Herz & Kosanovich, 2000; Rothstein & Herz, 2000). In the general population, employment rates increase, the types of job held change, and both the number of hours worked and hourly pay increase across the 13- through 17-year-old age range. Among youth with disabilities, the same pattern holds true (Exhibit 5-7). Among 13- and 14-year-olds, 42% work during a 1-year period. The employment

Exhibit 5-7
EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, BY AGE

	13 or 14	15	16	17
Percentage holding regular paid jobs during the past year:				
At any time	42.2 (2.7)	52.5 (3.4)	59.8 (3.0)	66.8 (3.7)
During both the summer and the school year	23.8 (2.4)	30.8 (3.1)	33.6 (2.9)	45.6 (3.9)
Percentage currently holding regular paid jobs	9.3 (1.6)	15.6 (2.5)	29.6 (2.8)	39.0 (3.8)
Percentage working at:				
Maintenance	36.7 (4.3)	29.9 (4.5)	17.9 (3.2)	10.8 (3.1)
Personal care	27.8 (4.0)	22.1 (4.1)	14.9 (3.0)	12.3 (3.2)
Food service	4.2 (1.8)	11.0 (3.1)	22.0 (3.5)	27.2 (4.4)
Trades	5.8 (2.1)	7.8 (2.6)	8.6 (2.3)	9.4 (2.9)
Retail	4.9 (1.9)	2.9 (1.7)	8.8 (2.4)	8.3 (2.7)
Clerical	1.7 (1.1)	4.6 (2.1)	9.1 (2.4)	8.9 (2.8)
Percentage working during the school year: ^a				
Up to 8 hours	82.0 (4.4)	67.7 (5.9)	39.0 (5.1)	32.3 (5.6)
More than 16 hours	5.6 (2.7)	9.4 (3.7)	27.5 (4.7)	28.8 (5.4)
Percentage working in summer jobs: ^a				
Up to 8 hours	61.0 (4.7)	44.0 (5.3)	27.6 (4.0)	18.2 (4.0)
More than 16 hours	21.8 (4.0)	34.3 (5.0)	54.5 (4.4)	66.2 (4.9)
Percentage earning minimum wage or more	37.3 (5.6)	39.2 (5.6)	54.5 (4.7)	64.8 (5.2)

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.

^aThe category 8.1 to 16 hours is omitted from the table.

Standard errors are in parentheses.

rate rises steadily, to 67% among 17-year-olds ($p < .001$), a 25 percentage point increase over the 5-year age span. Neither summer-only nor school-year-only employment rates change a great deal; the real growth is in the percentage of youth who work in both the summer and the school year; it nearly doubles from ages 13 to 17 (from 24% to 46%, $p < .001$). Over the same age span, current employment rates increase 30 percentage points—from 9% to 39% ($p < .001$).

Almost two-thirds of working 13- and 14-year-olds with disabilities work in either maintenance or personal-care jobs. However, there are significant changes between the ages of 15 and 16, when many states permit youth to begin working for licensed employers. This opportunity can prompt a move from informal work, such as babysitting or lawn mowing, to more formal employment. So, for example, among 16-year-olds, 18% of youth work in maintenance jobs, compared with 30% of 15-year-olds ($p < .05$). At the same time, the percentage working in food service jobs increases to 22% for 16-year-olds from 11% for 15-year-olds ($p < .01$). At age 17, the trend continues, with more youth working in food service jobs (27%) than in maintenance jobs or personal-care jobs (11% and 12%, respectively, $p < .05$).

The number of hours worked per week in summer jobs is progressively higher for each age cohort. For example, among 13- and 14-year-olds, 61% work up to 8 hours per week, and 22% work more than 16 hours per week. In contrast, among 17-year-olds, these percentages more than reverse, with approximately 18% working up to 8 hours and 66% working more than 16 hours.

Neither hours worked in school year jobs nor hourly pay shows this steady increase for each age group, but there are marked changes between 15- and 16-year-olds. A large majority of employed 13- through 15-year-olds with disabilities work up to 8 hours, and about 8% work more than 16 hours a week. In contrast, more than one-fourth of both 16- and 17-year-olds, work more than 16 hours per week ($p < .01$ between 15- and 17-year-olds). Similarly, the younger age groups are least likely to be paid the minimum wage or more (37% and 39% for 13- through 15-year-olds), whereas 17-year-olds are the most likely to be paid at that rate (65%, $p < .001$).

Gender. In the general population, boys and girls have similar employment rates (Rothstein, 2001; Herz & Kosanovich, 2000). However, 14- and 15-year-old boys are more likely than girls to work at formal jobs for licensed employers, are less likely to work at informal jobs (Rothstein & Herz, 2000), and typically earn slightly more. Employment patterns of youth with disabilities follow similar patterns (Exhibit 5-8), except that holding only a summer job is more common for boys with disabilities than for girls (18% vs. 13%, $p < .05$). Like their peers in the general population, the types of job boys and girls hold differ. For example, maintenance jobs are the most common types of job for boys, accounting for almost one-third of their employment, whereas personal-care, including babysitting, is by far the most common type of job for girls, accounting for almost half of their employment. Wage differences are pronounced, particularly at the high and low ends of the earnings spectrum, with 57% of boys earning the minimum wage or more, compared with 37% of girls ($p < .001$). There are no significant differences in the hours that boys and girls work per week during the school year or the summer.

**Exhibit 5-8
EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES OF
YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, BY
GENDER**

	Male	Female
Percentage holding regular paid jobs during the past year:		
At any time	56.0 (2.0)	49.9 (2.7)
Only during the summer	18.3 (1.5)	13.1 (1.8)
Only during the school year	5.1 (.9)	5.6 (1.3)
During both the summer and the school year	32.6 (1.9)	31.3 (2.5)
Percentage working at:		
Maintenance	30.3 (2.5)	8.6 (2.3)
Personal care	6.5 (1.4)	47.0 (4.1)
Food service	17.3 (2.1)	14.3 (2.9)
Trades	11.1 (1.2)	.8 (2.7)
Retail	4.7 (1.2)	10.2 (2.5)
Clerical	6.0 (1.3)	6.8 (2.1)
Percentage earning minimum wage or more	56.7 (3.2)	37.1 (4.8)

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.
Standard errors are in parentheses.

Household Income. In the general population, youth from families with higher incomes have higher rates of employment and higher wages (Huang, Pergamit, & Shkolnik, 2001; Johnson & Lino, 2000; Herz & Kosanovich, 2000). This pattern also holds among youth with disabilities (Exhibit 5-9). The 1-year employment rate of youth from families with incomes of more than \$25,000 is approximately 20 percentage points higher than that of youth from lower-income families (60% and 64% vs. 42%, $p < .001$). Current employment rates of youth with disabilities from families with incomes of more than \$25,000 are more than double that of youth from lower-income families (25% and 30% vs. 12%, $p < .001$). The percentage of youth earning the minimum wage or more also is higher among youth in the highest-income group (57%) than among those in the lowest-income group (41%, $p < .05$).

For the most part, there are no systematic differences between youth with different household incomes in the types of job they hold or the hours they work. An exception to the pattern is that youth from families with the highest incomes are less likely than youth from families with the lowest incomes to work in maintenance jobs (19% vs. 29%, $p < .05$).

**Exhibit 5-9
EMPLOYMENT RATES OF YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES,
BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND RACE/ETHNICITY**

	Income			Race/Ethnicity		
	\$25,000 or Less	\$25,001 to \$50,000	More than \$50,000	White	African American	Hispanic
Percentage holding regular paid jobs in past year:						
At any time	42.0 (2.6)	60.1 (3.0)	63.8 (2.9)	62.5 (2.0)	41.6 (3.4)	36.1 (4.3)
During both the summer and school year	20.6 (2.1)	37.7 (2.9)	41.2 (3.0)	39.5 (2.0)	23.1 (2.9)	14.6 (3.2)
Percentage currently holding regular paid jobs	11.8 (1.7)	24.8 (2.6)	30.3 (2.8)	27.8 (1.8)	13.6 (2.4)	9.8 (2.7)
Percentage earning the minimum wage or more	41.2 (5.0)	47.3 (4.9)	56.6 (4.4)	53.7 (3.1)	38.6 (6.8)	40.5 (9.3)

Source: NLTS2 Wave 1 parent interviews.
Standard errors are in parentheses.

Race/Ethnicity. Race/ethnicity is associated with differences in the likelihood that youth with disabilities are employed and, to some extent, their wages (Exhibit 5-9), as is found in the general population of youth (Gardecki, 2001). White youth are more likely to be employed in a given year (62%) than African American (42%) or Hispanic youth (36%, $p < .001$). They also are more likely to work during both the summer and the school year (40% vs. 23% and 15%, $p < .001$), and they are twice as likely as African American youth and almost three times as likely as Hispanic youth to be employed currently (28% vs. 14% and 10%, $p < .001$).

Not only are African American youth less likely than their white counterparts to be employed, when employed, they are less likely to earn high wages; significantly fewer earn the minimum wage or more (39% vs. 54%, $p < .05$). The lower likelihood of earning the minimum wage or more among African American youth with disabilities is evident in spite of the fact that there are no significant differences between racial/ethnic groups in the types of job youth hold. Hours worked also are similar across groups.

Summary

Almost 60% of youth with disabilities are employed during a 1-year period. Approximately 15% hold work-study jobs, approximately half of which are in food service, maintenance, or clerical positions. Work-study jobs are a particularly common source of work for youth with mental retardation, autism, multiple disabilities, or deaf-blindness.

During a 1-year period, 54% of youth with disabilities work at one or more jobs that are not associated with school, with more than 20% of them working on any given date. The 1-year employment rate is very similar to that of same-aged youth in the general population. Youth with learning disabilities, emotional disturbances, or other health impairments are the most likely to work at regular jobs, and youth with autism, multiple disabilities, or deaf-blindness are the least likely. Older youth, boys, youth from families with higher incomes, and white youth are the most likely to work, as is true for youth in the general population.

Overall, approximately 60% of employed youth work in maintenance, personal-care, or food service jobs. Maintenance jobs are most common for youth with mental retardation, emotional disturbances, or other health impairments, whereas personal-care jobs are most common for youth with hearing or visual impairments. As with the general population, the types of job held differs by gender and age. Girls are more likely than boys to work in personal care jobs, including babysitting, whereas boys are more likely than girls to work in maintenance jobs (many of which are lawn mowing or gardening). With age, the percentages of youth working in both of these informal types of job decreases, and employment in food service, trades, and clerical jobs increases.

During the school year, more than half of youth in every disability category work up to 8 hours per week. However, by age 16, approximately one-quarter of youth work more than 16 hours per week. During the summer, youth tend to work more hours, particularly older teens.

Half of youth with disabilities earn the minimum wage of \$5.15 or more. Age, gender, household income, and race/ethnicity are associated with youth's earnings. At ages 13 and 14, about one-third of youth earn the minimum wage or more; at 17, almost two-thirds do. In addition, boys tend to earn more than girls, youth from higher-income households earn more than those from lower-income households, and white youth earn more than African American youth.

Holding a job is an important marker for youth as they begin to take on adult roles and responsibilities—an accomplishment achieved by about as many high-school-age youth with disabilities as youth in the general population. Longitudinal analyses from NLTS2 will explore the relationships between work during their secondary school years and both postschool employment and achievements in other domains. Future analyses also will identify secondary school factors that contribute to a higher likelihood of employment, both during school and in the postschool years.